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THE DECORATOR AND FURNISHER.

A MODERN DECORATOR.

By VIRGINIA VAUGHAN.



DEBT that can never be repaid is owed by society to those who minister to its æsthetic element, to the painter, sculptor, architect, and decorator, who create the things of beauty that are joys forever. In our own country the refining and ennobling influence of art is beginning at last to be properly appreciated; the importance of the artist's vocation was never before so well understood and frankly acknowledged.

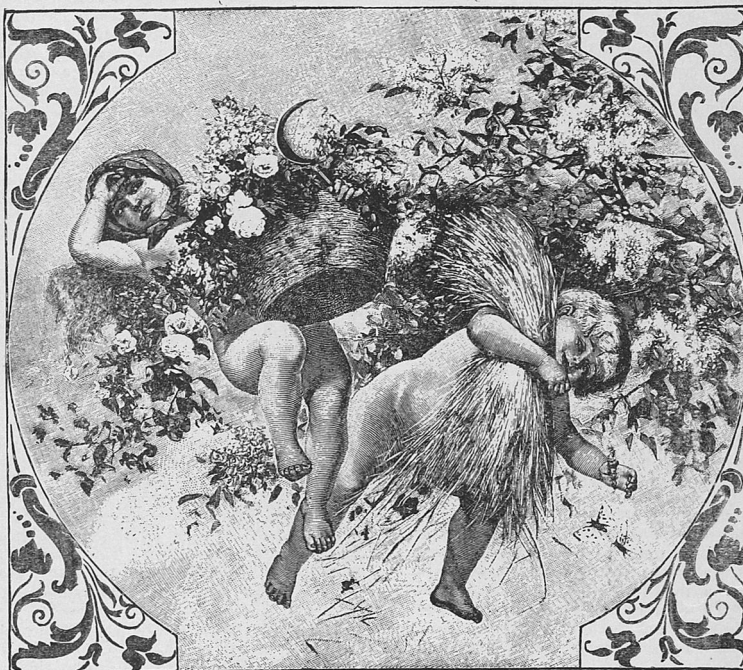
During the last two cycles the community at large has gained immensely in insight and knowledge on this subject; and at the same time there has been a corresponding advance in one and all of the sacred sisterhood of arts. In architecture this spontaneous national movement has been marked; not long since crude and provincial, our cities and towns have now an air of magnificence commensurate with the grandeur of their destiny; the public buildings that have been recently erected in these great centers of prosperity, are fully on a par with the noblest structures of recent date in the old world, while private residences, the palatial mansions of the wealthy, are superior probably to those in other countries, not only in comfort, but also in the taste and elegance of their luxurious appointments.

Decoration, meanwhile, that most fascinating branch of art, has been assiduously cultivated with equal success. The buildings whether public or private that claim admiration for their architectural significance, are fitly adorned with due judgment and discretion. Every style of ornamentation that has found favor in the most prolific art periods of the past, the gorgeous and fantastic Moresque, the splendid and imaginative Renaissance, the Louis Quatorze, Elizabethan, Queen Anne, are being faithfully reproduced in our midst, and frequently with an added charm of novelty and originality to demonstrate that they belong to a new age and country. The aristocratic abodes of the most prominent members of society, exclusive and fastidious, were in danger formerly of being disfigured by the tawdry and tasteless decorations which were at one time in vogue; at present the most vulgar and ostentatious of the *nouveaux riches* are wise enough, guided by popular opinion, to place their houses in the hands of well known decorators, with the result of securing an elegant environment that can scarcely fail to elevate their own standard, while affording an almost certain guarantee that their children will come to the front well equipped with some at least of the desirable qualities in which their immediate progenitors were deficient.

Whenever a spontaneous national movement of this character occurs whether in art or literature, the creative minds by whom it is carried forward, group themselves about certain strong individualities, one or many, as the case may be, who seem to act as centers of attraction, appointed to influence and sustain the most opposite types of genius and character, each in his respective province. It is impossible to study the Italian Renaissance without recognizing in Lorenzo the Magnificent such a leader and inspirer; to him Michael Angelo, Raphael, Leonardo, and indeed all the great artists of the period were indebted more or less for their development, inspiration, the direction given to their transcendent qualities—it is certain that none of these great artists would have been what they were without the sympathy, advice and co-operation of the most splendid art patron that the world has known.

In the multifarious, many sided Nineteenth century, the social and artistic conditions of the past are constantly recurring, although necessarily with their specific features greatly modified; we have now for example all over this country numberless groups of artists and artisans who are laboring to bring

about an efflorescence not unlike that which in Italy and the sixteenth century a single imposing constellation was sufficient to represent and conduct. But in all of these various artistic centers we can rest assured that there will be one leading mind who performs the necessary role of sustaining and guiding the inspirational activity circling about him; and it would be a task of no small interest to make a list of such striking personalities and compare their different methods and characteristics. In the city of New York it is certain that the art of decoration has been indebted to no one more than the well-known J. F. Douthitt of 286 Fifth avenue, New York, who has made its study and im-



A Decorative Tapestry Panel, by J. F. Douthitt & Co., 286 Fifth Avenue, New York. Subject—Harvest Time.

provement his life work. Mr. Douthitt is well fitted for the mission to which he has devoted himself. He had to begin with the inestimable advantage of a thorough collegiate education, and extended travels in Europe and the East, with every opportunity of studying at the fountain head the marvellous creations of the past. To this fine culture, enthusiastic love of art, and the knowledge and good judgment of the connoisseur, he adds the careful accurate habits of the thorough business man, an unusual combination of qualities to which his success has been due. All his energies are concentrated upon the object to which he has devoted himself, that of creating a higher standard of art decoration for the public at large, and of developing and turning in this direction the talent of American painters, so that the demand thus created may be duly supplied.

With his assistants and employees Mr. Douthitt maintains the relation of friend, adviser and patron, and naturally is very popular among them. He is always on the lookout for exceptional ability, and when he has discovered it, whether it is merely the deft skill of a trained workman, or the flashing inspiration of undiscovered genius, he gives it immediate recognition and opportunity. To all he is affable, just and gen-

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erous. Thus the corps of his artists and workmen are united and enthusiastic; they have a common aim and are capable of producing the finest results. On the other hand his wide information and good taste are invaluable to the wealthy proprietors with whom his important contracts are made. The path of the contractor is not always strewn with roses, any more than that of the architect, the artist or the professional man. It stands to reason that he will frequently come into contact with rich men, obstinate and prejudiced, who bring forward all sorts of hideous and impossible plans and suggestions for the adornment of their houses, none the less admirable in their own opinion because they offend every canon of art that is known. In such a case it is the decorator's manifest duty to open the eyes of the worshipper of Mammon, convince him of his own ignorance, and save him from the discredit of disfiguring his walls with designs which good judges will be sure to pronounce pretentious, vulgar or commonplace; and those who have studied human nature can readily imagine how difficult a task this will sometimes turn out to be. But it will go hard with such an individual when he has Mr. Douthitt to deal with, for the latter has truly a terrible tenacity, and being able to sustain his own views with unanswerable arguments, it is ten to one if he does not carry his point. Sometimes the unhappy owner of the house whose establishment is under discussion persists in having his own plans executed, only to see his mistake as soon as it is too late, when they confront him upon his own walls in all their crudeness and discord; and there have been instances in which the millionaire under these circumstances has had the magnanimity and good sense to have the design promptly wiped out and replaced by those which had been proffered him by his judicious adviser; a brilliant and somewhat amusing triumph for him; and a very costly one (for to him also it is after all a triumph) for the proprietor.

The decorator is in his true Eldorado when he is called upon to adorn the beautiful mansion of a family not only of large wealth, but of refinement and cultivation, with whose various members he can consult upon equal ground, pleased with and inspired by their suggestions, modifying his own views in accordance with them, able to display all the resources of his fascinating art with the certainty that they will be understood and appreciated. Then are created the enchanting boudoirs, the stately libraries, the sumptuous drawing-rooms that are dreams of beauty, a delight to dwell in and contemplate—then homes are created, worthy of the name even, although palaces, a true manifestation of the character and spirit of the happy circle to whom they afford luxurious shelter. Among the rare specimens of decoration recently completed, or in process of completion, under the direction of Mr. Douthitt, it would be worth while for any lover of the beautiful to pay a visit to the Nevada, on the boulevard, for the sake of the magnificent panels of the vestibule, superb flower pieces by M. Paul de Longpré, to whom the first prize for flower painting was awarded in the last Paris exposition. All the apartments are decorated with exceptional taste and elegance, but the panels to which I have referred, are of a beauty and splendor that recall the sumptuous villas and palaces of mediæval Italy.

The house of Dr. Keyes, 74th street and Fifth avenue, which has just been decorated under Mr. Douthitt's supervision by the celebrated artists, Carl Hanson and Henry Bjerre, is a rare example of what can be accomplished in the way of decoration under the happiest auspices. It is a triumph even in the present day of art and luxury. The dining-room in painted tapestry panels with a broad rich tapestry frieze, executed by Mr. Douthitt's tapestry artists, has an air of picturesque distinction and originality that is captivating in the extreme. It does not reproduce directly any of the ancient or mediæval schools, but is distinctively American; showing the noble capacity of painted tapestry in mural adornment. The panels in this room are admirable and fascinating works of art, for the same reason that the canvasses of the popular masters of the day are so considered. The drawing-room with panels of wreaths, festoons, and hanging baskets of flowers, a stately frieze, and ceiling with a design of cupids of exquisite and ethereal delicacy, is as perfect a specimen as has yet been produced of the Raphaellesque Renaissance. The library is Moresque of the finest and purest type. This house is Mr. Douthitt's latest *chef d'œuvre*, and one of which he has every reason to be proud.

THE DECORATOR AND FURNISHER settles every vexed question on house decoration.

A NEW YORK DRAPERY ARTIST.

MR. ERNEST HAGUE is the drapery artist of the establishment of Madame Thurn, of 426 Fifth avenue, New York, who conducts a well-known establishment as couturiere, or ladies' dressmaker, and also does a large business in interior drapery decorations. Mr. Hagué is this lady's son-in-law, and we take pleasure in showing some examples of his work as designer in draperies and dress fabrics. Mr. Hagué is also an expert window dresser, and has done some notable work in this line.

Mr. Hagué was born in London in 1861, and belongs to a fine French family. He passed his childhood up to six years in London, when his parents removed to the Castel de Mace, Commune de St. Denis, Blois, France. In this beautiful home on the banks of the Loire he remained for twenty years. He spent a great deal of his time in the study of art, his first



Drapery for Vestibule Door, Designed by Ernest Hagué.

essays being in the direction of architectural painting. He made a beautiful design of a Porte d'Honneur, or garden gate, in the style of François I., for his father's chateau. Another architectural work was the design of a minaret in the Arabian style, which to this day adorns the Castel de Mace. He afterwards designed a monument to his sister, which was executed by the celebrated sculptor, M. Halou.

He gave up architecture to make a study of painting, and made a business of portrait painting, and executed a great many orders for the Belgium nobility, he having gone to that country in following out his career as an artist. He painted the por-